

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-08

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SUBJ: MIMEX OFFER OF WEAPONS TO URUGUAY

CINCSO FOR GEN. ROSSON

REF: MVD 537, STATE 039287, MVD 1109 AND STATE 068608

1. SUMMARY: U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE IS A KEY ISSUE IN
U.S.-URUGUAYAN RELATIONS AT THIS JUNCTURE. A REVIEW OF
U.S. WEAPONS OFFERS UNDER THE MIMEX PROGRAM IS PROPOSED.
END SUMMARY

2. FOR SEVERAL MONTHS WE HAVE REPORTED THAT THE QUESTION
OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO URUGUAY IS A KEY ISSUE
AFFECTING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS IN THE CURRENT SITUATION.
THE INCREASED INTEREST OF THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY IN
SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS OF MATERIEL MAKES THIS ISSUE EVEN MORE
CURRENT. WE BELIEVE THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY LEADERS ARE
NOW AWARE THAT PRINCIPALLY OWING TO CONGRESSIONAL RESTRICTIONS,
THERE IS VERY LITTLE POSSIBILITY THAT THE U.S. CAN PROVIDE
THE URUGUAYAN ARMED FORCES WITH ANY SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS OF
GRANT MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND THAT EVEN CREDITS WILL BE LIMITED.
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3. WE BELIEVE LOCAL MILITARY LEADERS NOW UNDERSTAND THAT THE MIMEX PROGRAM OFFERS THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY SERVICES THEIR BEST POSSIBILITY FOR OBTAINING U.S. EQUIPMENT AT A COST URUGUAY CAN AFFORD. THIS VIEW IS NOT SHARED BY THE ARMY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, GENECTL CHIAPPE POSSE WHO, WITHOUT REFERENCE TO ANY NEEDS OF THE OTHER SERVICES, HAS INDICATED HIS ONLY DESIRE IS TO FULLY EQUIP THE ARMY DURING FY74. THE SPORADIC AND LIMITED CHOICE OF MATERIEL AVAILABLE UNDER MIMEX WILL NOT PRODUCE HIS DESIRED RESULT ALTHOUGH THE ARMY HAS OBTAINED A WIDE VARIETY OF EQUIPMENT VIA MIMEX. THE PROGRAM HAS ALSO BEEN USED TO OBTAIN MUNITIONS (SEE REFTELS) AND SMALL ARMS.

4. IN CONNECTION WITH THIS LATER FEATURE OF THE MIMEX PROGRAM IT IS TIMELY TO REVIEW WHETHER WE SHOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE OFFERS OF CERTAIN TYPES OF MATERIEL SUCH AS .50 CALIBER MACHINEGUNS, 20 MM. CANNONS, SMALL ARMS AND SIMILAR WEAPONS. IN THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION EXISTING IN URUGUAY, TPPRE HAVE BEEN SITUATIONS OF CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE MILITARY/POLICE, SECURITY FORCES AND PROTESTING WORKERS AND STUDENTS. EMPLOYMENT BY THE URUGUAYAN SECURITY FORCES OF U.S. FURNISHED ITEMS UNDER NEAR-GRANT CONDITIONS IS POTENTIALLY CONTROVERSIAL ESPECIALLY NOW WHEN THERE EXISTS AN EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL SITUATION AS REGARDS GOU POWERS. THE DEPARTMENT IS PROBABLY MORE AWARE THAN WE ARE OF THE POTENTIALLY ADVERSE CONSIDERATIONS OF THIS ASPECT OF THE MIMEX PROGRAM.

5. PERTINENT CONSIDERATIONS WITH REGARD TO A FAVORABLE DETERMINATION IN CONTINUING TO MAKE WEAPONS AVAILABLE UNDER MIMEX ARE:

A) THE URUGUAYAN SECURITY FORCES HAVE HERETOFORE DEMONSTRATED RESTRAINT AND GOOD JUDGMENT IN HANDLING UNRULY CROWDS;

B) WE BELIEVE THERE IS NO DESIRE BY THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY FOR AN OPEN CONFRONTATION WITH DISSENTING GROUPS AND THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE NOT RESPONDED TO PROVOCATIONS;

C) FOR SEVERAL YEARS, THE U.S. HAS FURNISHED THE URUGUAYAN SERVICES WITH POTENTIALLY LETHAL WEAPONS WHICH COULD BE EMPLOYED NOW OR LATER NO MATTER WHAT WE DECIDE TO DO IN THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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REGARD IN THE FUTURE;

D) SHOULD WE NO LONGER MAKE OFFERS FOR SURPLUS WEAPONS UNDER THE MIMEX PROGRAMS, THERE WOULD BE A STRONGLY ADVERSE REACTION THE URUGUAYAN MILITARY AND A PROBABLE DECREASE IN ANY ABILITY WE MAY HAVE TO INFLUENCE THEM OR THE GOU.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: AFTER BALANCING THESE FACTORS IN THE LIGHT

OF LOCAL CONSIDERATIONS, WE RECOMMEND THE DEPARTMENT CONCUR
IN CONTINUING MIMEX OFFERS OF WEAPONS (SEE PARA 3 ABOVE) ON
A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE EMBASSY'S BEST
JUDGMENT ON NEEDS AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS.
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